DA'WAH TO AMERICANS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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I. INTRODUCTION

I am convinced that many of the failures to bring Islam to Americans can be attributed to a lack of understanding in the following areas:

A. The basic psychology of attitudinal change

B. The basic values and beliefs of Americans

C. The fundamentals of Christian theology

Obviously, one would have to write a book on each of the topics to do justice to them. Unfortunately, here I can only attempt to make some provisional suggestions. It is up to the reader to accept, reject, or add to my suggestions; but more importantly, to act--to make the ideal, the real.

II. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DA'WAH

Psychologists have found that certain properties of the deliverer of a message, as well as the receiver of the message, help predict the probability of a change in the receiver's attitude. Consistently, it has been found that a speaker who is perceived as highly prestigious is more influential in changing attitudes than one who is held in low esteem.[1] Consequently, organized da'wah efforts should focus on enlisting speakers who are not only competent, but have the qualities that others view as exemplifying competence; e.g., dignity, confidence, poise, precision in speech, intelligence,

Correlative to the qualities of the speaker are the hearer's qualities. For example, certain audiences are more open to debates and discussions, whereas other audiences are influenced more by lectures. Two groups tend to be convinced by the lecture format; viz., audiences composed largely of those who initially agree with the content of the lecture and audiences composed primarily of uneducated individuals. The discussion format is more successful with individuals who initially oppose the message and with more educated individuals.[2] The implications these facts have for da'wah are clear. Try lecturing to blue-collar workers, high school students, etc. Group discussions might work better with professionals, college students, and hostile audiences. A combination of a short lecture

followed by group discussion unites both formats.

Consistency theories, including cognitive dissonance theory and balance theory, indicate that there are several actions one can take to aid others in changing their attitude. Let us consider four tactics.

1. If you can get someone to act against his values or prejudices in accordance with the belief you want the person to accept, then the individual might change his attitude.[3] For example, if you invite someone to dinner who is generally critical of your culture and he accepts the invitation, tries the food, plays with your children, and generally enjoys himself, then you maximize the possibility that the person will develop a different attitude toward your culture. In other words, a change in behavior can cause a change in attitude. This is the opposite approach of typical da'wah programs that assume that we must change a person's attitude before their behavior will change.

2. Both psychologists and common sense tell us that presenting information to someone that conflicts with his present beliefs might cause the person to change his attitude.[4] This approach works best when the individuals are friends. In the case of strangers, the effects are much less noticeable.

3. Pointing out the inconsistencies in someone's beliefs can cause enough internal conflict that the person adopts a new belief. However, one must be aware of the fact that small attacks upon another's belief system might inoculate him to further attacks and make him hold his beliefs even stronger than he originally did.[5]

4. It has been discovered that changes in law produce changes in behavior and, consequently, changes in attitudes.[6] With respect to da'wah, this can be particularly important on college campuses. If students lobby to protest and change practices that discriminate against Muslims, then the abolition of discrimination can make Islam acceptable to the masses of individuals and perhaps result in better attitudes toward Muslims and Islam. Non-student Islamic communities should also fight to change discriminatory laws. For example, fight for your rights to have adhan called aloud in the open air for all the prayers.

This is simply part of a Muslim's struggle to make the social conditions conducive to the spread of Islam.

Do not expect that just because you challenge someone's beliefs that he will immediately and invariably embrace Islam. There are several other possible responses.

1. The person might ignore you or stop thinking about the issue.[7] Some people will come right out and say, "I don't want to discuss it anymore."

2. He may try to avoid you, attack your character, gossip about you, or otherwise verbally or physically attack you.[8]

3. Intelligent individuals, or individuals who view themselves as enlightened, will often agree that it is O. K. to disagree.[9]

4. The person might try to belittle the importance of the conversation. For example, he might say that it is a quibble over semantics, an intellectual game, or not related to the practicalities of life.[10]

5. Individuals who embrace some large philosophical outlook can try to subsume the message under their world view.[11] Christians could hear your argument as evidence that you embrace the folly of man rather than the wisdom of Christ. A Marxist, can view you as tacitly cooperating with the imperialist capitalist pigs. In fact, they can be so busy trying to fit your beliefs into their ideology that they hear very little of what you say.

6. There is a group of individuals who thrive on conflict and debate.[12] Often they are hedonistic, liberal arts types who argue for the sake of arguing. They are not interested in the truth and will often take a position they do not even believe in just to exercise their wits. There is a natural tendency to dismiss these noncommittal types as hopeless cases, but if you can find out what they do take seriously, then that can serve as a starting point for a real dialogue.

7. Robert S. Ellwood discusses what he calls the "metaphysical tramps". These individuals jump from religion to religion and are usually very attentive to anything that differs from the American mainstream of religions. The typical "metaphysical tramp" is white, female, single, well-read, highly educated, and has few friends.[13] They are given to sudden conversions, become very active, and then begin to complain that they are not being fulfilled. I have met this type repeatedly on college campuses, and when they inquire about Islam they usually want to hear about Sufism, mysticism, and the esoteric. I do not

suggest that one should discourage such individuals, but I think that if one meets someone with these characteristics, it is wise to slowly introduce him to Islam emphasizing that Islam is against any mystical flights from reality.

In the U. S. you will often encounter highly prejudicial individuals. Usually, individuals who are socially mobile, especially downward, are more bigoted than individuals who experience socioeconomic stability.[14] The white lower-middle class are often hostile to foreigners, blacks, intellectuals, and anyone other than equally bigoted fundamentalists. For these individuals, and for authoritarian personalities in general, rigid attitudes serve an important ego-defensive function.[15] Simple black-and-white categories,as can be found in fundamentalist Protestantism,help them make sense of a world that is rapidly changing.

One psychological study found that when scientists provided bigoted individuals with a discussion of how their prejudicial attitudes functioned to protect their ego against real or imagined dangers, that the researchers were more successful than when they gave them factual information about blacks, Catholics, etc.[16] Bigots rarely hold their prejudicial views for intellectual reasons; therefore, a purely intellectual approach to overcome the prejudice rarely works. Consequently, da'wah to these individuals must be highly personal with an appeal to their emotions as well as their reason. If literature is distributed to them, make it brief and in very readable english. Avoid foreign words, even transliterations. Instead, give them the meaning of Islam in the language and style they understand.

Individuals who are victims of discrimination and the objects of prejudice are often the ones most likely to embrace a new religion. Those who are socially, economically, and politically disinherited are also much more likely to join cults, sects, and fundamentalist millenarian groups.[17] It is not surprising that these same individuals often inquire into Islam, not that Islam shares an essential similarity to the above-mentioned religious groups, but because of Islam's clarity of lifestyle and egalitarian practices. In the U. S., the greatest number of converts to Islam has come from urban minorities. Unfortunately, in the minds of many Americans,Islam in America is synonymous with Black Muslims. More specifically, they remember the violent acts in the 1960's and 1970's performed by individuals who called

themselves Muslims. Regardless of whether the acts were justifiable, Americans view Islam as a racist religion. Da'wah efforts must be focused to a much greater extent on middle class suburban families, those in small towns, and rural areas as well as urban minorities. It must be stressed that Islam has no ethnic or color barriers.

Finally, studies show that even if someone changes his attitudes he might revert back to his old belief if he does not have a supportive environment.[18] Muslims committed to da'wah must direct more of their attention to the new convert. Anyone who has lived in America knows that America is filled with temptations diametrically opposed to the Islamic ideal. Therefore, the new Muslim needs to develop a total Islamic identity by being fully incorporated into the life of the Muslim community. Expect the American convert to feel alienated from his culture and friends, and be prepared to bring American Muslims brothers together where they can develop new friendships and a new identity while they resolve problems they share as converts. It is also helpful to encourage friendships between knowledgeable brothers and the new convert. Also, since these converts are often very eager to get involved in da'wah work where their knowledge of the culture can be quite valuable, invite them to get involved, giving them the appropriate guidance.

Related to the issue of conversion is the statistic that converts who come to embrace a religion over an extended time period have a greater chance of maintaining their faith than those who experience a sudden, emotional conversion. During the extended conversion period, the inquirer has the opportunity to confront adjustment problems gradually. The sudden convert often meets the problems "all at once" and can experience a period of great crisis. Crises may be inevitable for the American convert, but someone with a clear understanding of Islam has a better chance of meeting the challenge. If someone does experience a sudden conversion, the need for community is even greater. Make sure that fellow Muslims channel the convert's zeal onto the clear Sunnah-lit path.

III. AMERICANS: THEIR BELIEFS AND VALUES

It is not easy to sketch a profile of the average American given their diversity, but some statistics may help give us a better picture of what Americans are like. The typical

American is 30 years old; lives in an urban or suburban area; has completed high school; owns a color television and watches it an average of 29 hours, 32 minutes per week; lives in a household of 2.75 persons with a family income of $23,947; has a 49% chance of being divorced; eats less dairy products, eggs, and meat than in the past, in favor of fresh fruits, vegetables, and poultry; spends $1,647 yearly on recreation, $616 on alcohol, $331 on religion and charitable causes, and $304 on smoking; and has life expectancy of 73.6 years.

Presently, there are 83% caucasians and 12% blacks in the U. S. Some rather depressing figures are that there is over 1 abortion to every 3 live births in spite of the fact that 67.7% of the couples are using contraception. Among the live births, 9.4% of the caucasian mothers and 54.6% of the black mothers have illegitimate children. Between 1960 and 1980, divorces increased by 140.9%. In fact, in 23 of the 50 states over ½ of the marriages end in divorce.

The incidence of crime and suicide is equally depressing. Between 1970 and 1980, murder increased 30.8%, robbery 42%, burglary 56.2%, assault 78.9%, and rape 98.9%. More than 26,832 Americans committed suicide last year. Approximately, 10% of the deaths of young men between 15 and 19 years of age were due to suicide, and the percentage increased to 14.8% for the 20-24 year age group.[19]

Americans are predominantly Christian in their faith; although, except for a small minority, they know very little about church dogma. Religion is a minor motivation in their lives.[20] Most Americans are Protestants, but since protestantism is conducive to fractionation, there are hundreds of protestant bodies that differ radically on doctrinal matters. For example, the Baptists, the largest protestant denomination, are composed of over 30 different Baptist associations, and the differences among the associations can be quite marked. Consequently, the single largest church in the U. S. is the Roman Catholic church with over 52 million adherents.

Most Christians have accepted the American dogma of the separation of church and state, which has led to a schizophrenic lifestyle and set of ethics. Large numbers of Christians find no contradiction between the religious commandment not to kill and the

legality of abortion. Many believe that Christian ethics and business ethics are (and should) be separate. Many also believe that Christianity and capitalism are synonymous.

During the 1960's and 1970's, there was growing disapproval and distrust of the American government. During this time, great strides were made in the legislative and judicial spheres for minorities, women, the handicapped, and the unemployed. Later, with the U. S. petroleum shortage, the Iranian crisis, the rise of the moral majority, and massive unemployment, Americans developed more conservative values. The typical college student is more interested in getting a good job, joining a fraternity, wearing the right clothes, and driving the right car, than in the meaning of life, social justice, and charitable acts. By the time these students reach their twenties, many have no sense of direction or purpose to their lives. Consequently, they turn to alcohol, drugs, and casual sex to either numb their senses or overwhelm themselves with an alternative consciousness. For a growing number, these false pleasures have lost their potency so in desperation they turn to perversions that ultimately end in despair or an incessant search for a lost innocence.

In stark contrast to the "lost generation" you will meet many other good individuals who work hard to raise their children, and who look at the world around them and wonder where it all went wrong. For the ones who are uneducated, simple solutions are seized upon as "the" solution. You might hear them blame the communists, drug dealers, OPEC, homosexuals, liberal professors, blacks, big business, etc., for America's problems.

For the most part, Americans are uninformed about politics and they rarely get involved in political action. For example, in 1980, only 57.7% of those who had reached voting age in Indiana actually voted.[21] If asked why, many Americans would respond that all politicians are corrupt and that voting is just a waste of time. But while Americans often criticize an administration and complain about the economy, they never question the integrity of the political system or capitalism. For them, America is still the greatest country on the face of the earth.

In addition to these general points, there are some characteristics of Americans that

are directly relevant to da'wah.

1. American's are cynical. Consequently, if you profess to believe something, then you had better practice what you preach; otherwise, they will be quick to judge you a hypocrite. They might also conclude that since you are a Muslim and you do bad things, that Islam is bad. It is obviously faulty logic, but the fact remains that they will judge Islam by your actions. Your actions speak louder than your words; therefore, act like a Muslim.

2. As children,Americans are taught that it is impolite to discuss religion or politics. So while they might bring up the subjects when they are alone with you, they could think that it is in bad taste to discuss the issue in the presence of a group of people. Some individuals are very embarrassed to discuss religion in public. There are other ways to publicly discuss Islam avoiding any such embarrassment. Individuals will be interested in learning about your culture, so why not discuss the Islamic elements of your culture. When someone asks you why you refuse to drink alcohol, date, eat pork, or wear revealing clothes, you can use the occasion to introduce them to some facts about Islam.

3. Americans are amazed at how friendly Muslims are. Some will interpret it as naiveté, but nonetheless they will find your politeness, kindness, honesty, and concern very refreshing. This is most important,because Americans complain that religious people are only interested in their souls, but not in them, not in their personality. Show them that Muslims do care about personalities as well as souls. Friendship; displays of concern about their health, their families, their school grades; invitations to dinner; and small gifts are very touching in the busy impersonal world that America has become.

4. Americans tend to be punctual. If you have an appointment, either business or social, then be on time. Also, Americans rarely visit someone unannounced. Even good friends or relatives will call before they drop in for a visit.

5. Correct the myths that Americans have about Islam. To many, Islam is synonymous with the sword, oil, Arabs, slavery for women, and disgusting displays of wealth. Misrepresentations of Islam are commonplace. For example, a Bible handbook printed by a Protestant press calls Islam, "a religion of the sword and hate".[22] A newspaper article stated

that Islam did not begin to practice polygamy until after World War II.[23] Is it any wonder that Americans hold such strange views about Islam? Try to show them that these stereotypes are not true. This won't be easy, because often the Muslims who are most visible are the ones who act the most un-Islamically. A portion of our efforts should concentrate on bringing Muslims back to Islam. In the long run, this may be the most effective way of spreading Islam in America.

6. Because few Americans know much about Christian theology, do not assume that they understand or accept the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Trinity, original sin, the infallibility of the Pope, transubstantiation. For purposes of da'wah never tell a Christian what he believes. Find out what his understanding of Christianity is, and use his understanding as the basis for introducing Islam to him. For example, you will find many Christians who do not believe that Jesus is God or that a baby is born sinful. It would be easy to introduce these individuals to the Islamic view of the nature of Jesus or discuss the meaning of baptism in light of someone taking a shower when he converts to Islam. For Roman Catholics, water is blessed and placed at the entrance of the church. A Catholic dips his fingers in the "holy water" and blesses himself with the sign of the cross upon entering the church. The priest also washes his hands during the mass before the consecration of the bread and wine. These practices give Muslims a common ground to discuss the Islamic practice of ablution.

IV. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Christianity has divided into so many churches, sects, and cults, that it is extremely difficult to even talk about "the beliefs" of Christians. One of the most common mistakes that Muslims make is to assume that all Christians believe the same doctrines and practice the same rituals. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

For the purposes of this paper I have decided to divide American Christians into three groups: Roman Catholics, Protestants, and a miscellaneous group. I will try to indicate the differences among the groups concluding with the implications for da'wah.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM. Since Catholicism is the oldest Christian faith and the

background against which to understand Protestant theology, I will discuss it in considerable detail. Catholics believe that their faith is a revealed religion; i. e., that God revealed His nature and commandments through the Bible and through Tradition. The Bible is divided into the Old Testament consisting of 46 books and the New Testament comprised of 27 books. The first five books of the Old Testament are called the Pentateuch and are suppose to be identical to the Jewish Law or Torah. The Catholic Old Testament also has seven more books than the Protestant version. Catholics recognize that parts of the Bible are obscure; therefore, they appeal to the early Church Fathers, church councils, and papal declarations for its authoritative interpretation. The Church's interpretation of the Bible tends not to be fundamentalist; i. e., literalist, although on some doctrines the Church takes a literalist stance.

Official doctrine is that Adam and Eve (not necessarily actual historical persons) were created by God in a state of innocence and holiness. They were tempted by Satàn to eat from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil resulting in their loss of the right to heaven. As a consequence ofthis "original sin" they and all their descendants, except the Virgin Mary, were doomed to suffering, death, and an innate disposition to evil. Only Jesus' death and resurrection could atone for original sin.

To understand how Jesus' death could merit such reward one has to understand the doctrine of the Incarnation. Supposedly, Jesus is the perfect Son of God, who took a human nature and united it with his divine nature. Thus Catholics believe that Jesus is fully man and fully God. Original sin was viewed as infinitely serious because it was against the infinitely perfect God. Therefore, only a perfect sacrifice could atone for the sin. Only God is perfect, so somehow God had to be sacrificed. Yet, a man also had to be sacrificed since it was man who originally sinned. Consequently, Christians were driven to believe that Jesus was the God-Man. Moreover, Jesus is viewed as the second person in the Holy Trinity. Although Catholics claim to be monotheistic, they believe that in God there are three divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and each person is fully God, but not the totality of God. Each person has the same divine nature, but only Jesus also has a human nature.

The Church holds that Jesus, in obedience to the will of the Father, instituted the Catholic Church through which the life of Christ is poured into the believers through the sacraments, also instituted by Christ. The Church through its priests, distributes the sacraments, supposedly giving the believer the grace necessary to attain eternal bliss in heaven. There are seven sacraments: baptism, reconciliation (confession), holy eucharist (communion), confirmation, anointing of the sick, holy orders (ordination), and matrimony.

1. Baptism. Baptism is the sacrament that is supposed to remove original sin from the soul and make the individual a Christian. It consists of at least pouring water over the person's forehead with the priest saying, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". Baptism is viewed as necessary for salvation. Catholics baptize infants, since anyone who dies without baptism is not assured of salvation.

2. Confirmation. Confirmation is usually administered by a bishop to children in order to give them the special grace and strength to defend their faith.

3. Reconciliation (confession). It is claimed that confession is the sacrament in which the sins committed after baptism are forgiven by a priest. All Catholics, including the Pope, bishops, priests, and lay people are required to confess their serious sins to a priest at least once a year. In order to be forgiven the Catholic must be truly sorry for his sins and make a firm resolution never to commit the sin again. Following the confession the priest assigns a penance, usually a small number of prayers, as temporal punishment for sinning against God.

4. Holy Eucharist (Communion). This is the sacrament which the Church says contains the true body and blood of Jesus under the appearances of bread and wine. Catholics believe that the priest has the power to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. This change is called transubstantiation and is generally rejected by Protestants. In all Catholic churches some of the consecrated bread is kept in a golden bowl (ciborium) within a tabernacle. Catholics genuflect, touch their knee to the floor, in the direction of the tabernacle before they sit in church as a sign of respect to Christ.

5. Holy Orders (Ordination). Ordination is the sacrament by which male Catholics become priests and receive the power and grace to perform the mass and forgive sins.

Presently, a priest can not marry; however, this is only a church law instituted by Lateran II Council in 1139 and can be changed by the pope at any time.

6. Matrimony. Marriage is the sacrament by which a Christian man and woman are united in marriage until one of them dies. A valid marriage may not be terminated for any reason. To obtain a divorce and to remarry while the original spouse is still alive is to commit adultery. However, under certain conditions the Church can issue a decree of nullity declaring the apparently valid marriage actually invalid. Since the primary purpose of marriage is to have children, any artificial means of preventing pregnancy is sinful.

7. Anointing of the Sick. This sacrament is given to those who are in danger of death due to sickness to prepare their souls for eternity. It supposedly removes sins and it is believed to have the power to restore health in some cases.

In addition to these sacraments, the Church has over 2,000 laws not instituted by Christ. These laws can be and have been changed by the Church throughout the ages. For example, Church law used to prohibit eating meat on Friday. This law was changed in the 1960's. One of the most interesting Church laws is that all Catholics between the ages of 21 and 60 must fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is defined as eating only one full meal at any time of the day, plus an optional two snacks as long as these two snacks do not equal another full meal. Drinking liquids, including milk and fruit juices is allowed. All Catholics over 14 must abstain from eating meat and soups, gravy, or sauces made with meat, on Ash Wednesday and all the fridays of Lent.

It is believed that the Christian who has faith, done good deeds, and is in a state of grace at death may enjoy heaven. If someone dies guilty of minor sins or if he has not atoned for his sins, then the soul is detained in purgatory to be purified. It is believed that all the souls in purgatory will eventually reach heaven. Catholics often donate money to have prayers or masses offered for the souls in purgatory. They believe that any soul sent to hell will remain in hell forever.

One area nearly all non-Catholics have difficulty understanding is the Roman Catholic

hierarchy, especially the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope. The Pope is the head of the Church, supposedly the successor to St. Peter, the first pope and companion of Christ. Through the Pope, either directly or indirectly, proceeds every act necessary for the governance of the Church. Thus the Papacy is an absolute monarchy. Papal infallibility signifies that when the Pope speaks on a matterof faith or morals either directly or indirectly in the Bible, then the Pope is protected by the Holy Spirit from making an error. The Pope may not add to or subtract from the number of sacraments, but he may change Church laws; regulate holy days; appoint Cardinals, bishops, monsignors; grant indulgences; canonize saints; form religious institutes.

The real work of the Church is done by the priests and sisters (nuns). Priests are of two kinds: diocesan priests and priests belonging to religious institutes. Diocesan priests are the ordinary priests who run the churches under the guidance of a bishop. Priests who belong to religious institutes live in a community of priests who are dedicated to a particular form of work. Institutes can be divided into two kinds: the contemplative and the active institutes. The contemplative institutes such as the Trappists and Carthusian monks devote themselves solely to prayer and penance in isolation from the world. The active institutes each have a specific kind of duty; e. g., missionary activity, education, hospital work, etc. Examples of active institutes are the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, Salesians, etc. Members of religious institutes take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. All sisters (nuns) are members of religious institutes and also take the same vows.

I will note some of the general differences between Catholicism and Protestantism before describing the dominant features of the leading U. S. Protestant bodies.

1. Faith. For a Catholic, faith is intellectual; i. e., knowledge of things unseen. For a Protestant, faith is emotional. In the words of Martin Luther, faith is a "reckless confidence" in the goodness of God.[24] It is a Catholic doctrine that the existence of God can be proven through reason. Protestants generally reject the possibility of any such proof. Protestantism was shaped by Luther when he said, "Whoever wants to be a Christian should tear the eyes out of his reason".[25]

2. Authority. Catholics recognize the Bible and Tradition as authoritative. Most

Protestants only accept the Bible as authoritative (sola scriptura). This is seen in the extreme in fundamentalist Protestantism. Whereas Catholics leave scriptural interpretation to the Church hierarchy, in Protestantism each man is viewed as a priest capable of interpreting scripture. Needless to say, the doctrine of individual interpretation has been the single most important factor in the fractionation of the Protestant movement. Catholicism stresses unity and central authority, whereas Protestantism stresses plurality and individual autonomy.

3. Mary. Catholics and most Protestants believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. In 1854 Pope Pius IX declared that Mary was sinless from the moment of her conception in St. Anne's womb. All Catholics must also accept Pope Pius XII's declaration in 1950 that Mary was "assumed" or taken body and soul into heaven, her body not allowed to suffer corruption. Protestants accept neither of the declarations. Protestants and Catholics also disagree on the perpetual virginity of Mary. Catholics say that she remained a virgin throughout her life. Protestants point out that the Bible talks about the "brethren" of Christ. Catholics do not worship Mary, or the statue of Mary, but they do believe that she is the "Mother of God" and deserves special veneration (hyperdulia). Protestants consider it a scandal to call her the Mother of God.

4. Saints and Purgatory. In Catholicism the cult of saints refers to the veneration (dulia) of holy persons who have died and have been officially declared to be in heaven. Catholics may pray to saints asking them to pray to Christ for their intentions. Protestants do not believe that anyone can stand between their prayers and God. Some Protestants call any believing Christian a saint.

Catholics base their belief in purgatory on II Maccabees 12: 43-46. However, in the 16th Century, Martin Luther rejected all the deuterocanonical books (including Maccabees) as well as the following New Testament books: Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. By 1700 the Lutherans had reinstated the New Testament books, but the deuterocanonical books were not accepted. This in conjunction with the blatant abuse

of indulgences under Pope Leo X probably account for the absence of purgatory from Protestant eschatology.

5. Sacraments. Protestants accept only two of the seven Catholic sacraments; namely, baptism and holy eucharist. Some Protestants practice infant baptism, whereas other Protestant groups believe that baptism should be postponed until adulthood when the person can make a profession of faith. Although Protestants practice communion, they reject transubstantiation and give the sacrament a different meaning.

There are more than 250 Protestant church bodies in the U. S. The majority belong to the following denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, and the Holiness sects.

Baptists. Baptists are the largest of all the American Protestant churches. The Baptists are a very conservative group who believe that baptism by total immersion is a sign that one has been born-again; i. e., experienced and decided in favor of the salvation offered by Christ. They do not have a formal set of doctrine, but they believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God and sole source of religious authority. They also believe in original sin, salvation by faith through grace and not by good works, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the Genesis account of creation, etc. The Baptists are fiercely patriotic, although they staunchly support the separation of church and state. They generally dislike Catholicism, but recently the groups have cooperated on issues such as abortion. Each Baptist church is autonomous and lacks the elaborate hierarchy of the Catholic church.

Methodists. The Methodist church is the second largest Protestant body with a total U. S. membership of 9.8 million as compared to 29 million Baptists. Methodists accept the above-mentioned Baptist beliefs, but their evangelistic zeal is not quite so intense. In addition, they stress the assurance of salvation and the possibility for the convert to experience complete holiness in this life.

Lutherans. Lutherans claim a membership of 9 million, making them the third largest Protestant church. The central article of faith is that man is born completely evil and can

only become righteous in the sight of God through God's grace which forgives us our sins. Baptism is necessary for salvation and is performed upon infants. Lutherans also practice optional private confession and a non-sacramental rite of confirmation. Their worship service is highly ceremonial and is very close to the Catholic form of worship.

Presbyterians. There are presently 4.5 million U. S. Presbyterians. Presbyterians accept the sacraments of baptism and holy eucharist. Baptism is not viewed as necessary for salvation and can be performed on either infants or adults. They can be extremely liberal theologically or extremely fundamentalist. The church has a reputation of being a "comfortable" religion of the upper-middle class, but historically it has fought vehemently for therights of minorities. Many Presbyterians hold to Calvin's doctrine of predestination, "eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others."[26]

Episcopaleans. There are 3 million Episcopaleans in the country, but membership is steadily declining. The church is intermediate in theology between Catholicism and the other Protestant bodies. While scripture has primary importance, some authority is attached to tradition. Some Episcopaleans accept all seven sacraments, venerate the saints, and share other Catholic practices. The church is marked by a wide variety of beliefs and practices. On September 16, 1977, nearly 500,000 members oficially broke away from the main body pledging to form the Anglican Church in North America. The complaints of the dissidents included protests against the ordination of women, the replacement of the Book of Common Prayer, and liberal positions on abortion and divorce. In contrast to this conservative movement, one can find many churches holding "Integrity" meetings where homosexual members and clergy come together to worship and socialize. Recently, Roman Catholics have started a similar group called "Dignity".

Holiness Sects. The Holiness Sects are a loose collection of sects that share the belief that each person can become holy in this life. They tend to be emotionally charged fundamentalist groups attracting lower-middle class and lower class individuals. In addition to the traditional Protestant Christian beliefs many believe that Jesus's Second Coming is upon us. The Pentecostal groups stress a second baptism of the Holy Spirit in which the

members "speak in tongues" that only individuals with the gift of interpretation can understand. Many members believe in spiritual healings and some rather far out groups handle poisonous snakes as acts of faith. Their worship services center around emotional preaching concerned with the themes of the sinfulness of man and the hope of salvation through the blood of Jesus. They are known for their lively music, singing, and shouting. Like many of the Baptists they tend to be extremely Zionistic, anti-Catholic, patriotic, and imbued with missionary zeal. Hal Lindsey, a respected spokesman for this movement and the author of The Late Great Planet Earth, describes the Arab cause against "Israel" as part of the Communist movement to destroy the restored state of "Israel".[27] These fundamentalist groups have polluted television and radio with countless programs constantly begging for donations to fight atheistic secular humanism and to convert what they call the "Moslem pagans" in the Middle East and Africa.

Two groups,not accepted by the Christian mainstream, but found on nearly every college campus, are the Mormons and the Moonies. A common sight on campus is a couple of clean-cut,handsome,young men in navy-blue or black trousers and white shirts riding bicycles and distributing literature mentioning the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. These young men are missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons). The Mormons believe that they are the true Church of Christ restored in America. They base their beliefs on the Book of Mormon dictated by Joseph Smith who claimed to have been visited by the angel Moroni, who directed him to a secret case containing gold plates inscribed in secret symbols that he could read with the help of instruments also given to him by Moroni. Mormons believe in a physical God and that prophecy continues even today. They are very moralistic refraining from alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee, birth control, and divorce. Until recently they did not permit blacks to enter the priesthood, but a new revelation supposedly reversed this practice. Mormons are a very successful and distinctively American religious sect.

There are more than 1,000 cults in the U. S. with an estimated combined membership of approximately two million. One of the most publicized and active of these cults is Reverand

Sun Myung Moons's Unification Church (the Moonies). Reverand Moon teaches that God intended Adam and Eve to be pure but Adam tempted Eve and had sex with her causing all subsequent generations to be impure. Supposedly, God gave man a second chance by sending Jesus to marry and have pure children, but Jesus was crucified before he could marry. Mankind was left impure until a new Messiah came. Reverand Moon does not openly admit that he is the Messiah, but he has said that when he was sixteen, Jesus came to him telling him that the Messiah was born in Korea between 1917 and 1930. It just so happens that Reverand Moon was born in Korea in 1920. He does claim to be the Parent of the World, uniquely capable of cleansing it of its sin. Moonies raise large sums of money by selling flowers, candles, and candy on the streets. On campuses they use names such as CARP and invite potential converts to weekends in the country or free vacations in Florida where they methodically overwhelm the visitor with excessive warmth and attention. The Moonies clean-cut, pro-American, warm style has grossed them an annual U. S. income of $60,000,000. Reverand Moon himself owns a $625,000 estate in Irvington, New York. Although Moon and the Moonies claim to stress sexual morality, Moon was arrested and imprisoned for practicing ritual sex.[28]

What are the implications of Christian theology for da'wah? The following are a few suggestions that come to mind. God-willing, other brothers and sisters will discover even better programs.

1. The Catholic church has discovered that cult members tend to be white, middle class, and between 18 and 30 years old (23 is the average age). Over 35% are ex-Catholics and 15% are ex-Jews. It is believed that the reasons these individuals turn to cults is a combination of the traditional church's failure to address their search for personal identity and meaning, the breakdown of the American family, moral relativism and decay, and crass materialism.[29] If Muslims are to reach this group, then they must portray a strong sense of community, brotherhood, moral purity, and spirituality. Unless Muslims can shake the stereotypical view of Islam as the religion of hate and wealth, these individuals will continue to turn to cults. Since the 18-30 age group is desperately looking for a real community or family, let

them know about and experience Islamic brotherhood. Be friendly, talk, and give them a feeling of security. Converts to Islam in this age group should be kept busy in organizing and carrying out masjid activities.

2. Americans are confused by the fragmentation that is characteristic of Protestantism. I have heard them say, "I don't understand why there are so many groups each saying he is right and all the rest are wrong, yet they all want to go to the same place. It just doesn't make sense." Yet the fierce individuality of Americans, particularly in the south and midwest, turns them away from Catholicism. They say, "I don't want any Pope telling me what to believe". Muslims must demonstrate that Islam is a single harmonious brotherhood without a hierarchy. Let Christians know that Islam is open, trusting and stresses love, justice, human dignity, and individual responsibility. The Islamic prohibitions against back-biting and spying will also appeal to American's sense of privacy.

3. Zionists, "Israel", in particular, has courted the support of both liberal and fundamentalist Protestants. The liberal Protestant-Jewish alliance has been sought for many years. In the past four years the Jews have had immense success enlisting fundamentalists as allies. For example, Jerry Falwell, the leader of Moral Majority, received the Jabotinsky Foundation award presented by Menachem Begin "in recognition of many years of service to Israel and the Jewish people everywhere." A new fundamentalist-action group called the TAV Action Committee has been established in Portland, Oregon to politically lobby for Jewish concerns. In June 1982, the "Evangelical Christian Declaration of Support for Israel and the American Jewish Community" was drawn up affirming that the evangelicals are committed to the security of "Israel", believe that Jews are the "Chosen People of God", and call for Arab leaders to unequivocally embrace the legitimacy of the "Israeli" State.[30] In light of these unholy alliances, Muslims must develop an extensive, well-organized campaign to inform liberal Protestant and fundamentalist Protestant ministers about the history of Palestine and the truth about Islam. This must become a priority both at the national level and the individual masjid level. National, regional, state, and city Christian organizations must be contacted as well as individual churches.

4. Episcopaleans, Catholics, and Lutherans are used to highly ritualistic religions. Their members will be attracted to the Islamic form of prayer and fasting. Many of these individuals have a keen sense of social justice. If there is any area that Muslims in America have neglected it is a sense of social justice. Muslims in the U. S. must become more visible and vehement in their support of minority rights, fair wage laws, and economic reform.

5. Fundamentalists are not impressed by ritual. They seek stability, assurance of a perfect divinely inspired religious text, and emotional satisfaction from their religion. They treat the Bible as a science text; therefore, they will be impressed by demonstrations of the agreement of science and religion. Muslims knowledgeable in the Qur'an as well as science may be particularly suited to talking with these individuals. Remember that these groups have a very strong emotional attachment to Jesus as their Savior. Rather than directly attacking the sin of shirk, let them know what the Qur'an and aḥadith say about Jesus. I have found that Sura XIX (Mariam) often impresses fundamentalists. Liberal Protestants do not take the Bible as infallible so these tactics won't work with them, although they will be intellectually interested in the Qur'an and in comparing religions.

For many of the fundamentalists, drinking, gambling, pornography, dancing, and rock music are viewed as immoral. The Islamic sense of morality can serve as a common ground for dialogue with them. Finally, fundamentalists are violently opposed to Communists. Assure them that Islam is also opposed to any atheistic system.

6. Christianity claims to be the religion of Love. In the Gospel of St. Mark 12: 30-31, Jesus supposedly repeated Deuteronomy 6: 5 and Leviticus 19: 18, essentially saying that the basic law for Christians is to love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself. When a Muslim has said or done a particularly generous thing, I have heard well-intentioned Christians say, "He is more Christian than Christians are". Simple acts of love that are much appreciated by Americans are: cards or flowers given upon the death of a loved one, an offer to go to the grocery when someone is sick, an occasional telephone call asking them how they are doing, a post card when you go on vacation, a "thinking of you" card when you are separated by long distances and time, or a smile and

the words, "I don't know how to tell you how much our friendship means to me".

7. Contact churches about scheduling inter-faith dialogues on subjects of mutual interest. I have participated in organizing discussions with Mormons on the notion of prophethood, Catholics on sacrifice, fundamentalists on heaven and hell, Hindus on the unity of God, etc. I found that it helps if a variety of Christians are invited to dialogues. This way the diversity of Christianity and the unity of Islam is made clear without Muslims explicitly making an issue of it. It is always wise to hold meeting/workshops with Muslim brothers and sisters explaining the psychology of da'wah before engaging on a large scale program of dialogues with Christians.

8. Donate good books on Islam to local public libraries, school libraries, libraries within university religious studies departments, Christian schools of theology (seminaries), professors teaching courses on Islam, local ministers/priests (many churches have libraries), high school humanities/sociology teachers, professors teaching introductory sociology or sociology of religion courses, prison libraries, hospital libraries, etc. Invite high school classes, professors, women's groups, church groups, writers of religious columns in newspapers, etc., to tour your Islamic center. Serve refreshments and give them a chance to ask questions. If you are sponsoring a lecture relevant to some academic department or professor, send them a letter of invitation and include relevant upcoming activities. If you can organize lectures in cooperation with other academic or religious groups, then you increase the chances of attracting a larger crowd.

9. Use the media wisely. Plan your activities well in advance and then notify relevant individuals about the event. Contact newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations at least a week or two ahead of time. Remind them a few days before the activity. Do not forget to announce the beginning of Ramadan and the days of the Feasts. Distribute flyers in prominent well-attended locations. Make them bright and catchy with the date, time, and location clear. Have the brothers and sisters personally invite guests. It helps to print inexpensive personal invitations that can be distributed.

When planning activities keep in mind that Unitarian-Universalist churches, Episcopalean

churches, Quaker meeting houses, and liberal Presbyterians will often be willing to let you use their facilities for events if you do not have enough space. Be sure to leave the premises clean after the activity and follow the event with a "thank you" note to the church.

11. Constantly police newspapers, textbooks, lectures, news broadcasts, and political speeches for anti-Islamic statements. Never let such a statement go without a response. If the misrepresentation is particularly serious, draw up a petition and get as many signatures as possible. If a businessman makes an anti-Islamic statement, depending on the seriousness and intentionality, threaten to boycott the business unless the statement is publicly retracted. If a professor behaves similarly, try to reason with him. If he persists, write to the chairman. If that does not bring about a satisfactory response, go to the Dean, the Vice-President, President, and board of directors. If a high school teacher does the same or a textbook is unfair, contact the principal and then the school board. Raise the issue at PTA or PTO meetings.

12. In your zeal for da'wah do not misrepresent Islam or the other religion. Do not stress similarities and overlook differences. Catholic -Protestant dialogues often failed in the past because they did not grapple with the real differences between the religions. State the Islamic position clearly and honestly using wisdom, psychology, and your knowledge of the culture and the other religion. Do your homework and study Islam as well as other religions and cultural beliefs. Above all, remember that ultimately success within da'wah work is dependent on the will of Allah. For us there is only the trying.

NOTES

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